

# Dangers of Forerunner Logic

by Ayla Curtis

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Summary: Weird events and a strange plot tied together with string.

The Chief finds a marine that doesn't seem to be in the right

dimension...it all goes pear shaped from there. Chap 3 done...a plot, hooray!

## 1. L 01: The Chief's New Marine

**\*\*Dangers of Forerunner Logic\*\***

**\*\*By\*\***

**\*\*Ayla Curtis\*\***

**\*\*Acknowledgement â€" I thank X-Mep for all her help with this fic. Sorry I keep bugging you, dude! \*\***

**\*\*Disclaimer â€" X-Mep and I do not own the rights to any games mentioned\*\***

**\_Author's Note â€" This is a very random fic based on mental images and daft conversations. It is a crossover between Halo: Combat Evolved, Halo 2 and a survival/horror game on the PS2 called 'Extermination'.\_**

**\_IMPORTANT - I'll write the Extermination parts in as much detail as possible so you don't have to find the game to understand the fic. Extermination sure isn't the best game in the world, and I think that it was a flop so it's probably unheard of by most people, but I like it anyways.\_**

**\_WARNING â€" OOCness ahead! I haven't personally played either of the Halos', I've only watched X-Mep play them, and so if this fic has problems I am sooooo sorry. Correct me but please don't Flame me. All suggestions are welcome. Mwahahaha! \_**

**extermination-game (dot com)\_ is the official web site for all those**

who wanna look for pics and additional info I haven't supplied yet.\_

## Level 1: The Chief's New Marine

The Monitor was \_seriously \_getting on the Chief's nerves. It was bad enough that he was well and truly lost inside the Control Base on the new Halo (someone tell me which Installation it is!) no thanks to Cortana's misdirection's, but now he had been mugged! \_Him, \_the Master Chief, Spartan-117 had been \_robbed\_! Some damned Infestation forms ('I-forms', for ease of typing) had swarmed out of nowhere and while he had been busy emptying his guns into them 343 Guilty Spark had zipped over at full speed and slammed into him. The Index had been knocked straight out of his armour and down a small hole in the floor. The Monitor had then teleported away the very moment that the Index was out of the cyborg's reach, which was just as well as the second Chief regained his balance he let loose hell. Nothing was safe as bullets sprayed aimlessly about the room, bursting corpses and Flood alike. Dead bodies seemed to live again as the shots jerked them about on the ground.

\_Chief, calm down!\_ Cortana yelled in the back of his head.

He did clam down, but only because all of the enemies had become non-existent; each and every one reduced to a sticky puddle on the floor.

"I'm calm, I'm calm." He replied, unconvincingly. "Now I am going to find that floating blue light bulb and smash it to bitsâ€¦and then I might even flush it down the nearest toilet just to make myself feel better."

\_You might want to get the Index back first. \_

"That might be a good idea, yeah." He said as he knelt beside the hole in the floor and peered into it. It was miles too small to fit himself through but he could still have a look. He couldn't see the t-shaped green key on the floor below onto which the hole looked but it could have just rolled out of sight.

\_We need to find a way to get down there\_ Cortana said urgently  
\_There should be a\_

He cut her off. "None of your directions have helped so far, y'know."

\_But I am \_sure \_this time, honestly, I mean it.\_

"I'd rather make my own way there, thanks all the same."

Their argument, however, was interrupted by a small, cute voice behind them on the other side of the room. "Demon!" it squeaked.

Chief stood and turned to be confronted by a Grunt. He levelled his Battle Rifle at it and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened.

He was fresh out of ammo. "Ah."

"I like my gun." Said the grunt, and aimed a Fuel Rod at the chief's visor.

Chief had only just begun to process the problem of whether he had the time to run over and whack the little Covenant irritant around the head when said body part suddenly got a messy hole in the side of it that was heralded by a single gun shot.

Blood spattered over the floor and the wall close by before the Grunt fell neatly over sideways. Dead.

"I like my gun too." Said a new voice that sounded somewhat tired.

The owner of the voice was sitting on an upper level with his legs dangling over the edge and some sort of customised assault rifle in his hands. He looked to be in his early twenties, 25 at the most, with short brown hair and blue eyes. His clothes were military but of a design that Chief did not recognise which consisted of a lot of black and grey. There was a lightweight but protective jacket made of a material that looked like a cross between leather, neoprene and Kevlar that was tight enough to show well defined and shadowed muscle structure below. He had a heavy belt that seemed to hang on his hips rather than his waist and trousers that looked to be made of pretty much the same material as the jacket but looser. They were tucked into his boots. There was a knife strapped to his left leg, a radio earpiece in his left ear and there was a crest on his right arm—but, again, it was from a regiment Chief did not know. The man's boots were also typically military and black shin and knee guards protected his legs and seemed to be almost part of the boots. He also had black gloves, a watch and there were straps about his uniform in strategic places to be used as a harness.

Cortana seemed just as confused.

Though the man appeared to be relatively young he also appeared to be world weary and bored, as if all he wanted to do was go home and sleep. The man got up and used a set of nearby stairs to reach the gore-covered level that Chief was on. "Looks like a set from a horror movie." He said as he stepped around piles of steaming organs with his boots making slight leather creaking noises in accompaniment with his steps.

Cortana studied the man through Chief's senses. \_Those clothes—that weapon—I the design of them is dated\_

"Who are you?" Chief demanded, not really sure what he should be doing with the armed human stranger.

The unidentified soldier type stopped a couple of feet in front of him, hooked his gun onto his back and finally introduced himself. "Sergeant Dennis Riley, Red Light team, US Marines Special Reconnaissance Unit. (RECON)"

"Marine?"

\_He doesn't look anything like a marine—he said 'US' US RECON, not UNSC—Red Light team? That doesn't even exist!\_

"Yeah, marine." Dennis confirmed with a nod.

\_Suspiciousâ€|highly suspicious. \_

"Why are you here?" Chief asked the self proclaimed Sergeant.

"I'd like to know that myself. There I am minding my own business when this funky floating blue light thing appears out of thin air and pulls off a 'Star Trek' moment; beaming me to this godforsaken place. I would just love to know where the hell I am." He looked about himself and his gaze stopped on the dead grunt. "What is it?"

"A Grunt. The lowest of the low in the Covenant forces."

"Reallyâ€|uhâ€|great." There wasn't a hint of enthusiasm in his voice but there was plenty of noticeable confusion in every word. "What does that make you then?"

"You can call me Master Chief. So long as you aren't on the Covenant's payroll you can say I'm on your side."

"Sure. Can you tell me why I'm here?"

"Can \_you\_ tell \_me\_ \_what\_ you're doing on this Halo?"

"What's a Halo? I'm guessing that it doesn't hover over an angel's head."

\_Something is not right here.\_

"You're kidding right? You don't know?"

Dennis shook his head. "Would I ask if I did? I've never heard of it. Look, whatever your name is, it's hard enough for me to come to terms with what I've seen with my own two eyes already, let alone what I didn't even know existed."

\_Where has this guy been?\_

'\_Well there's a thought.\_' Chief said privately to himself. "Riley, right? Right, well listen up, I don't know you, I've never heard of your 'team' so help me out here; where were you before you were here?"

"That's classified."

"You want me to help you?"

Dennis said nothing.

\_Amnesia, it's just got to be. He's hit his head on something and lost every marble he ever had.\_

"If you want help, I need some information."

"Sorry, but I'm not at liberty to give you any." He was very military about it, it wasn't an apology; it was a statement.

\_What does the Monitor want with him then? Why did he drag him

here?\_

"Stupid AI, he said he doesn't know." The Chief accidentally said out loud.

"Huh?" Dennis grunted.

"Ah, nothing." Chief said, waving one hand dismissively.

Remembering that he was out of useable weaponry Chief took a short wander about the room and picked up a couple of Needlers from a few Covenant corpses before turning back to poor lost Dennis. "I don't know why you're here but it can't be a good thing if it was the Monitor who delivered you."

"Monitor?"

"The blue light thing."

"Oh, ok."

\_Maybe we should find it and see if we can get it to tell us what it's up to this time.\_

'\_Good plan\_' "Hey, Riley, I think you had better stick with me. I'm going to find out what's going on."

"Sure." Dennis said with a shrug and swung his gun back into his hands.

Together, uneasy allies, they headed for the door.

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The place was quietâ€|where before there had been rooms filled with Flood there were now chillingly empty spaces. Too quiet.

Too much like a carefully set trap.

"Where are we going?" Dennis asked softly so as not to raise his voice and attract unwanted attention from things that might have a desire to rip him to pieces and eat what was left. He had his gun firmly to his shoulder and his eye trained along to the laser dot sight, checking the hall they had only just entered for potential threats.

"The Control room. It's somewhere I really don't want to have to wind up in but if this mess with you is going to be resolved it's the most likely place in which we'll get an answer." Chief looked up; there was a small hole in the ceiling of the hallwayâ€|this must be the hall that the Index had dropped into earlier. Unfortunately it was nowhere to be seen. '\_Damn, this just keeps getting better and better.\_'

\_The Monitor is still our best bet, so just keep going.\_

'\_Shut up and let me think for myself for once.\_'

\_Oooh, touchy.\_

Beside him, Dennis lowered his rifle and rubbed his eyes with one hand. "This really isn't my day. I wish I could've stayed at homeâ€|not accepted that damned missionâ€|but then the detonators would never have been setâ€|Cindy and Garyâ€|ah damnâ€|"

"What mission is that then?" Chief asked conversationally.

"Can't say." Dennis told him.

\_He'll slip at some point. You just have to keep asking.\_

'\_Shut up! Just for five minutes! Is it too much to ask!\_'

Down the hall a door burst open and out of it swarmed no less than twenty I-forms. Chief knew how to deal with them and they popped like gruesome party balloons under his gunfire.

"What in the hell!" Dennis exclaimed, putting his own gun to good use and picking off any that the Chief missed as his bullets swept the hall.

"Riley, meet the Flood." Chief said. "Do not let them touch you unless you have a burning desire to be an alien parasites' brand new host."

The wave of Flood died off without too much difficulty and then they were free to continue their searching.

"Mind telling me what the hell is going on here?" Dennis asked, hoping he wouldn't be faced with that again.

"That was the Floodâ€|or at least part of it anyway." He went on to give the man a short description of what the Flood were and what they liked to do best. He negated most of the history behind them, however, as he didn't think it important. How to get rid of them was all that the 'marine' needed to know.

Dennis listened to all he was told and then shook his head in a dejected manner. "God damnâ€|from one to another. I don't know which is worse."

"You had alien parasites on your mission?" '\_Ah ha, now we're getting somewhere.\_'

"Huh? I thought I told you; it's classified. Sheesh, get the message." He added under his breath.

"I heard that."

Dennis shrugged his shoulders non-committally, indicating that he couldn't really be bothered to care. He didn't see the point in trying to make excusesâ€|especially seeing as he had none to hand.

"Listen up, Riley; the Flood are not to be taken lightly. They may look easy but you haven't seen the half of it. I'm pretty much safe because of my armour and shield but you wouldn't stand a snowflakes' chance in hell if one of them managed to snag a hold of you."

"I didn't plan on letting that happen."

"That's just as well because I'm not going to be responsible for your life. Come on, keep up."

"I \_am\_ keeping up." Dennis grumbled as the Chief marched on ahead.

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The other rooms and halls turned out to be pretty much the same; they started off void of all life threatening entities and then ended up being smothered in bubble-bodied I-forms.

Dennis turned out to be rather handy to have around and they began to form a good tactic together. Chief would do the major clearout; focusing on the main body of the assault while Dennis would pick off the stragglers or ones that had managed to evade the initial onslaught of bullets, needles and super heated plasma blasts. The supposed marine Sergeant of the possibly imaginary Red Light team had damned descent aim and was pretty multitalented. As was his gun; described to the Chief as an SPR4 (Special Purpose Rifle Mark 4), it could be customised to the owners discretion and had many attachments as well as the actual rifle part. He had great fun cremating I-forms that dared to get to close with the optional Flame Thrower Unit. He was pretty handy with his knife too; the thin skin of the I-forms split easily under his slashes and their gooey contents all over the floor.

After one such room was cleared, Chief realised that he was dangerously low on ammunition again and there didn't seem to be any dead Covenant or marines about to supply him with more.

\_You'll have to backtrack. You can't go on without any ammo.\_

'\_No. There hasn't been any lying about for ages. I would have to go all the way back to the room where we first met Riley and I sure as hell don't want to trek that far. I want this over with. We are pressing on whether you like it or not. If I run out I'll just smash everything in the face.\_'

\_Don't blame me when you die.\_

'\_Don't worry; I will.\_'

\_Good. What?â€|â€|â€|Hey!\_

'\_For an advanced AI you are really slow sometimes.\_'

He was suddenly aware that Dennis was no longer following him. The black-clad soldier with the spiky fringe seemed to be listening intently to a door.

"Hello back there, I don't have all day!" Chief called to him.

"Yeah." Dennis said somewhat distractedly. "Sure, whatever." He made his way back to the Chief, though his head was the last part of him to turn and he kept glancing back at the door. He seemed to be a little paler than before.

"You look as if you've seen a ghost." Chief commented.

Dennis let his eyes flick back again. "If only." He mumbled. He said it in such a way that he hadn't really meant to be heard.

Chief stopped walking to have a good stare at the offending door. "Well what's wrong with it? Something inside?"

"That door is locked, right?"

"Without the right code, yes." Even with his enhanced hearing there was nothing that he could say was out of the ordinaryâ€|no shuffling aboutâ€|just, perhaps, some dripping waterâ€|but in a place like this there had to be burst pipes and leaks. "So what is it?"

"Nothing. I'm just hearing things. Forget it." He squeezed the grip of his rifle as if for comfort. "Can we just keep moving?"

Chief nodded. "Sure, I don't think we're far from the Control Room now anyway."

"Well, let's just pick up the pace."

\_He's nervousâ€|I think you should check out that room.\_

'\_Find the Monitor or open every door in this place that someone gets a bad feeling about? Make up your mind for crying out loud.\_'

\_Oh go and break the Monitor's bulb, that room isn't going anywhere and neither is its contents. It's secure.\_

The further Chief led his new marine away from that room the more he felt that Dennis wanted to run back to it. It was as though he really wanted to get away but also just wanted to finish off whatever it was that had spooked him. Chief decided that the minute he had bullied some answers out of the Monitor, he would go back with some heavy weaponry and see just what was behind the door.

"Are you going to tell me what that mission of yours was yet?" Chief asked again.

"No." Dennis replied simply. "You may as well just stop asking.

\_He'll give in at some point; you just have to keep at it.\_

'\_Now is not the time.\_'

\_But aren't you even the least bit curious? It could be important!\_

'\_I'm busy here, ok!\_'

They entered into yet another large roomâ€|but this one wasn't so empty. This one had a lot of corpses in itâ€|burnt and bloodyâ€|the floor was slick with the entrails of Flood in all its various stagesâ€|and there was a Sentinel Major hovering above the carnage ready to greet them.

To be continuedâ€|â€|



\_A/N â€" Hahahaha first chappy done! So people, tell me what you think. Also, my description of Dennis is a bit thrown together so you might wanna just check out that site for a pic. Bear with me; I know it's confusing at the moment. It will all make sense as it goes along. (If you want it to go along that is). Sidenote- Anyone out there knowhow can I get to upload symbols?\_

## 2. L 02: Of Ribs and Reclaimers

### Level 2: Of Ribs And Reclaimers

"Holy shitâ€|" Dennis stammered as he stared at the Sentinel Major turning to target them. It was not a comforting sight. "Whatinthebloodyhellisit!" the exclamation was spoken so fast it was produced as a single word.

"It isn't friendly." Chief told him. It was a fair description, if not somewhat short. "Avoid it and find me some damn guns; the bigger the better. Keep on the move."

"Ok, can do." Out of nowhere he had produced another attachment for his SPR4. The Flame Thrower Unit was gone and he was replacing it with a Grenade Launcher Unit.

\_Handy, that.\_ Cortana commented.

Chief was about to ask the man how many grenades he actually had when they both had to part and dodge separate ways to avoid a carefully aimed energy beam.

The Chief kept moving so as not to be a sitting cyborg duck, taking a stand every so often to throw a hail of rounds into the Sentinel Major. He could only hope that Dennis was doing the same. Glancing around before leaping away from a mortar blast, he tried to spot him but could see him nowhere. The Sentinel Major, however, did not seem all that interested in the Chiefâ€|it would defend itself and attack if he managed to get too many good hits in but otherwise also seemed preoccupied with locating Dennis.

Chief found that he had just let loose the last bullets of his SMG and doubted he was going to be able to grab anything else. He had ditched his last two empty lighter guns ages ago but had found that the majority of corpses in the room were I-forms and unarmed Combat forms (C-forms), thus holding no bounty for him to save his armoured hide with. The Sentinel Major came in for the killâ€|and was struck from behind by a grenade that exploded neatly on impact. While it struggled to recover, Dennis sprinted forward. "Hey, helmet head, catch!" and threw Chief a Plasma Rifle and a Plasma Pistol that he had randomly snatched up while running.

He really did come in handy.

The Sentinel Major still seemed more interested in the new marine and seemed to be trying to follow him now that it had managed to find him. This did of course mean that Chief could hit it from behind but it still didn't stop the great lump of a thing from doing whatever the hell it wanted.

Dennis didn't have the opportunity to fire back; he just had to keep running or would have had it right in his face. But it turned out that he just wasn't quite fast enough; the Sentinel Major swept over until it came to hover above him. It was now far too close to use explosive rounds against it without blowing his own head off in the process, so in desperation Dennis simply held down the trigger and used automatic gun fire against its underside in a last ditch bid to keep himself alive. The claws of the Sentinel Major, usually used for snatching up vehicles and reducing them to twisted metal fragments, snapped down to crush against the Sergeant's midriff. It didn't kill him but the pain from having bones, muscles and organs being pushed together in the vice grip was excruciating. Dennis screamed out and shot at it aimlessly as though it would help. His clip emptied out against it but by then all of the air had been forced from his lungs and the rifle slipped from his numb fingers as he passed out.

The Sentinel Major carried him away too fast for the Chief to follow but it didn't take a genius to work out where it was most likely taking him. He was being kept alive—that meant someone or something wanted him that way, and what was the only thing here with a use for a human and that could also direct the Sentinels?

\_We carry on with the plan then?\_ Cortana asked.

"Yes." Chief agreed, picking up Dennis' fallen SPR4.

\_On to find the Monitor\_

"Exactly. If the Monitor wants Riley alive \_that\_ badly then so do I."

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The Control Room—god it was ages away. But he was just going to have to get there. It meant going outside again first, which could come in useful; it meant he could stop by the marine patrol waiting for him to get back and take them with him. Six extra pairs of eyes and hands would definitely do him the world of good.

Problem was it was going to take a shit load of trekking. It was \_ages\_ away; out of this entire structure, across open land and somehow \_flying\_ to get there.

"Damn." He sighed.

On his way through the building the Chief encountered a good deal of Sentinels and Flood but they were all relatively quickly dispatched even if it did take a bit of backtracking to pick up ammo and weaponry.

As he wandered he was fortunate to come across one hall in time to see the Monitor leading Dennis along. Though leading wasn't the right term. Dennis was holding his sides in pain and had a Sentinel following behind him as a threat to ensure good behaviour on his part. He had the Index jammed into his belt—and the Monitor was saying something to him. The Chief followed at a distance and kept out of sight so he could listen in. It would help to know just what the Monitor was up to before he stormed in guns-a-blazing.

"What the hell do you want from me? I feel like I've been stuck in a

meat grinder." Dennis complained. "Will you get that thing out of my face; I'm not going anywhere fast in this condition."

"I apologise for what must seem to be extreme methods but it is to \_protect \_you. You are needed. You are a Reclaimer and you have an important purpose to fulfil."

"What?" his voice sounded strained. He was clearly injured internally from the encounter with the Sentinel Major.

"You have seen the Flood, yes?"

"Yeah."

"You have had it explained to you and understand the threat they pose?"

"â€|" during the pause he made a wincing, grunting sound.

"Yesâ€|ow."

"Then you must activate the Installation and wipe them out. You are a Reclaimer and as such you have the capability. You must use the Index and destroy them all. That is what this entire Installation is \_for\_."

"What, this Halo thing the big green guy was talking about?"

"Indeed. I will take you to the Control Room and you will insert the Index into the Control Panel."

"Index? This thing you're making me carry around? It's a key?"

"Yes, yes, yes. Now you must use it as I have instructed to activate the Installation and exterminate the Flood."

\_Chief you have to stop him! He doesn't know what it will do; you never had the chance to say!\_ Cortana yelped loudly in the back of Chief's head.

'\_I second that motion\_' and with that thought Chief promptly stormed around the corner to find the Sentinel was still there with its laser trained on Dennis who had one hand wrapped about himself and was studying the Index by turning it over in his other.

"You again!" Screeched the Monitor as it saw Chief's approach.

"You're not supposed to be here! Go away!"

The Sentinel moved to hover between the Chief and Dennis and then two more emerged from an adjoining corridor.

If the Monitor had had a face, it would have been showing a furious expression. "Don't you dare try to meddle. He will complete what you could not."

"He might not." Dennis said, referring to himself in the third person. He winced before speaking up again. "It all depends on what you mean by 'exterminate'. I've heard that kind of phrase before and last time it didn't go well."

"Activation of the Installation will cause the death of all Flood within 25,000 light-years."

"That's right." Chief agreed "It causes their death by wiping out their food source, namely all sentient life forms. It'll kill everything self aware so that the Flood will starve."

Dennis absorbed all of this. "That right?"

"Wellâ€¦yesâ€¦it is the only way." The Monitor said as though it was the most obvious thing in the universe.

Dennis sneered. "\_All\_ sentient life? To kill a bunch of bugs? Bastard." He drew back his arm, though it caused him great pain to do so, and tossed the Index across the floor. "Screw you!"

Cortana gave a sigh of relief. \_He's not as dumb as I thought.\_

"Don't be so stupid! You must!" The Monitor yelled.

"Shut up. There's no 'must' about it. I'll do what I want. Is this why you brought me here? To crush the life out of me and then ask me to bring about Armageddon? Thanks but I think I'll pass."

"It is the only answer. The Flood \_must\_ be destroyed. They cannot be reasoned with and they consume all in their path. They have to be stopped. You must think of the \_bigger\_ picture."

"I won't commit suicide and genocide just because you ask me to, you sick metal freak."

\_I think it might be time to get rid of those Sentinels and get out of here, don't you?\_ Cortana suggested.

'\_I want Riley sent back to where he came from. I'm not going to baby sit a lost marine.\_'

\_Well, whatever you decide to do will you please do it now?\_

The Sentinels were moving and charging up. It was all Dennis could do to stay out of the way, wounded as he was and without a weapon, so he just kept moving and in the end found a place to hide. Chief took care of the Sentinels with calculated efficiency. This was what he was for and he was damn good at it. It took a little while but he won out in the end. The last Sentinel fell with a localised explosion of broken parts. By this time though the Monitor had pulled another disappearing act, leaving Chief alone except for Dennis who had reappeared from where he had been crouching.

The marine still had cracked ribs and bruised muscles but was determined not to let it get in the way. "Sorry I couldn't help." He apologised.

"You did something right." Chief told him whilst picking up the Index and squirreling it away. "You made a good choice there, Riley."

Chief offered him back his weapon and he gratefully accepted it, discarding the empty clip and slamming a full one into place.

"What am I going to do with you?" The Chief wondered out loud. "I still don't even know where you're from or how the hell you could get back thereâ€|and I really doubt we'll be finding the Monitor again any time soon."

Dennis shrugged and groaned as the action pulled on muscles that would have rather been left alone to attempt to heal. He couldn't think either. His poor confused mind was drawing a bucket load of blanks.

He said he was from the US marines, so I think we can safely say he's from earth. But, there is still no such thing as the Red Light unitâ€|I would knowâ€|I'm positive that I would know.\_

"Where did the Monitor take you from?"

Dennis gave him a sideways look. "Classified, and you know it."

"Honestly though; what the hell am I going to do? You're not exactly helping with all your confidential bullshit."

Dennis began to move away, one hand holding his gun while the other held his aching chest. "Since when did I become your responsibility? I'm capable of looking after myself, thank you very much." He was stopped by a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"I owe you." Chief said surprisingly calmly. " I don't want to admit it but you did me a favour back there with the Grunt and again with the Sentinel Major before it snagged you. I can't just let you stay here and get infested or bullied into doing something highly unhealthy. I'll take you to the rendezvous site outside and we'll work out a way to get you home to earth from there."

"Home to earth, what do you mean by that?" Dennis asked with worried eyes. "Where the hell am I then?"

"Not sure really; we blindly followed the Covenant hereâ€|but we're pretty sure that we're still in the same galaxy. It may take some time to get you back though, as we can't risk leading the Covenant right back to earthâ€|hmmâ€|looks like you could be roped into this war, Riley. Hey, are you cold? Oh...well why are you shaking then? You look a bit pale. Don't tell me you're sick; I'm not clearing it up."

"Notâ€|onâ€|earth?" Apart from that, all he did was blink in utter disbelief.

"Course not. Wellâ€|where did you think you were then?"

"Another god damned crazy government facility in the middle of nowhereâ€|" he said in a quiet voice.

"Will you please just tell me where the hell you were and what you were taken from; everything about you is completely wrong. Throw me a bone here."

"Lookâ€|I'm having trouble taking all of this in, ok? Tell you what; you go ahead and doâ€|whatever it is you doâ€|and I'll go my own way

and pretend that I have some small clue about where I am and how I'm getting back to Fort Ste- Ooh, forget that bit."

\_Ah ha! We nearly had him there.\_

'\_We? He did it all himself.\_'

\_Wellâ€|stillâ€|we're getting closer to some answers.\_

'\_Hmmm.\_'

Dennis rubbed his ribs. "I think I'll just go find that blue thing and have it send me on my way. Thanks for he help."

This time he was stopped, not by a hand on the shoulder, but by having his collar firmly grabbed hold of. He produced a choking sound before backing up a pace or two to free his airway. "What did y'go and do that for!"

"You're too much of a mystery for me to just let you wander off into oblivion. Plus, you'd be dangerous if you ever became a Combat form Flood. You're sticking with me whether you like it or not. You got that, \_marine\_?"

"I don't take orders from you. I don't even know you. And what the hell is with that suit, honestly?" he said while squirming to try and get the Chief to let go of him.

"Listen up, Riley. Wherever you're from, you're a long way from it now. Your rules don't apply here. There's the Flood, the Covenant and then there's \_me\_. Pick a side. One will infest you, one will kill you and the other can tolerate your existence and find you a way home."

\_Yeah, you tell him Chief.\_

"So basically, I don't have a choice." Dennis sniffed.

"Sure you do. Be a host, be a corpse, or be alive."

"You sure do drive a hard bargain." He said with a sneer. Being option-less made him feel trappedâ€|more so that he already was, stuck out in the middle of nowhereâ€|in space, according to the big green metal man.

Chief let him go and pointed to a door. "Go. March. We are out of here in a rapid fashion. I'm not staying here any longer than is strictly necessary. So, move."

With a stoic expression Dennis moved on, following the Chief's instructions and directions. Their path, as per usual, was impeded by the never-ending supply of Flood interrupted by the odd few lost and, previously, surviving Covenant.

Chief noticed that the fight seemed to have gone out of Dennis; it was as though something had died inside him and being told he was light years from everything he recognised was what had killed it.

Getting out of the building turned out to be easier than expected; after a while there were no more Sentinels' showing up, and the Flood seemed to be a little on the sparse side too. Everyone seemed to be taking a breather, including the Covenant who were keeping to themselves.

Dennis followed in a deep silence that echoed the bleak pattern of his own shocked thoughts.

To be continuedâ€|â€|

\_Author's Note â€" Wow, I've never taken this long to do a short chapter before. I promise that there will be a distinguishable plot soon, honest. I know it's a mess right now but there will be a point to it. At least now you know why Dennis was there. The 'how' will soon come to light. If you like this fic let me know coz there's not much point in continuing unless someone's reading. I can't see a hit count for my pages so reviews are the only way I know if its being read or enjoyed.\_

\_Big Thanks to Yomiko the hellbunny slayer and to chicken-chan for reviews thus far!\_

### 3. L 03: The Motley Crew

#### Level 3: The Motley Crew

After at least a quarter of an hour they emerged into the light illuminating the surface of the Delta Halo ring world.

Dennis couldn't help but stop and stare in both awe and fear as he gazed over the sweeping arc visible in the sky that was the rest of the Delta Halo ring world. He squeezed his eyes shut briefly and then snapped them open again as if somehow the world would go back to what he considered to be normal by this action. But alasâ€|it was not to be and the alien sight remained steadfast in his vision.

The land around him that he now followed the Chief through was enclosed on most sides by towering cliffs as well as the edifice they had left. The ground was sandy and bore the tread marks of military vehicles that had torn at the ground at high speeds before screeching to an unsteady halt. Burns and charring marred the sheer walls as well as the sand and the giant boulders that littered the scene here and there as if a passer by had carelessly dumped them to deliberately impede the progress of travellers rather than them being left by nature.

A little distance away, six marines were lazing about on some rocks and a couple of Warthogs.

Chief approached with a jaunty spring in his step and many humorous thoughts buzzing around inside his head, most of them to do with the UNSC marines' reaction to Dennis.

It didn't take them long to spot the newcomer and start gawping.

The Chief sighed inwardly; this was going to take some explainingâ€|he didn't like the expressions that they were starting to give him.

"He followed me home," The Chief called out, "Can we keep him?"

"What am I to you, a damn \_pet\_?" Dennis sneered.

If he hadn't been wearing the helmet, you would have seen Chief grinning like an idiot.

"Who is he?" One sergeant of the two in the UNSC marine unit asked.

"I found him inside. The Monitor dragged him here to try to get him to activate Delta Halo."

"Why him? Who \_is \_he?"

\_Introductions would be useful, Chief.\_

"Right!" Chief announced, clapping his hands together and rubbing them in a business like manner. "Listen carefully people because I don't want to repeat myself."

Everyone stared at everyone else alternately.

"This," Chief said as he patted Dennis heavily on the shoulder; nearly, accidentally, giving the poor man a broken collarbone to add to his list of injuries, "is Sergeant Riley. You can also call him Dennis. That's pretty much all he'll say unfortunately. He comes in handy and seems to be on our side, he's also willing to tag along and follow orders so be nice."

The marines glared and studied the unusual uniform of Dennis.

"Now," Chief continued. He worked his way down the line of marines and pointed to each respectively. "This is Sergeant Johnson, Sergeant Dakes, Private Martins, Private Macoon, Private Painter and Private Thring, who is more commonly known as Mr. Speed-Limit as he finds it difficult to exceed 30mph even on open flat land. As you can imagine, he doesn't get to drive often."

Thring stuck his nose up at this statement. "There is nothing wrong with wanting to be safe!"

Painter, the sole female member, slapped Thring upside the head. "Shaddup ya pansy."

Dennis took a good look at them all and wished that he was back with the Sentinel Major even though the mere thought of the giant metal car crusher caused his ribs to flare in agony. He got the feeling that his new comrades were going to give him trouble.

"What the hell do you think you're wearing?" Sgt Johnson demanded, with his ever-present cigar bobbing between his lips as he spoke.

"It was developed by Adaptive Armaments under commission of the Navy SEALs to be the ultimate in protective combat suits. It has excellent ventilation and water resistance and is bulletproof against even medium-arms. The Type Two, which is this one, also has thermal



properties to protect against arctic conditions."

"Well, you're gonna boil here, mate." Painter snorted.

"Do we still have the medical equipment?" Chief asked the group in general.

"Only half of what we should have thanks to Painter's stunts." Sgt Dakes sighed. He was referring to the fact that she was Thring's polar opposite; she should have been a stunt driver or daredevil. "We lost everything we had in the Warthog except ourselves because she rolled it again. Ammunitionâ€|med packsâ€|weaponsâ€|all of it goneâ€|oh, and Macoon's helmet as he neglected to do it up\_ again.\_ That's right, Macoon, you look at your feet in shame."

"Why didn't you stop to pick them up?" Chief queried. "I know we had a rendezvous time, but still."

"Stop? With a Wraith up our arses? Try again." Johnson said with a laugh.

"You got it then?" Chief said while looking around at the Wraith free area.

"Of course, eventually, but we would have been a lot better off if Martins could shoot straight and Thring didn't take so long aiming."

Both of the accused began to argue their defences. "I have a really bad cold." Martins snapped. "I'm tanked up with drugs and I still can't keep my eyes open. I'd be fine if I could \_see\_."

At the same time, Thring made his case. "I'm just trying to be accurate."

Painter started to giggle.

"And you can shut your trap." Sgt Dakes said to silence her. "I don't know which is worse about you; the way you drive or the rate at which you use up ammo."

"I'd say driving." Chief stated with a sincere nod of his head. "But that aside, can you snag a med kit and take a look at Riley; I think his chest's broken."

"How can you \_break\_ a chest?" Sgt Dakes wondered out loud as he sifted through the battered contents of a compartment in the Warthog Painter hadn't topped.

"Quite easily; he got picked up by a Sentinel Major."

Every marine present stared long and hard at Dennis while Macoon summed up their thoughts in three simple words. "And he survived?"

"I'm still breathing aren't I?" Dennis replied and rested himself against the cold hard side of one Warthog. "Look, people, I don't mean to sound rude but I would rather just find a way to get back to where I ought to be. That Monitor whatsit brought me here so it can damn well reverse it. I just have to find it. Don't worry, I'm not

going to activate anything and wipe out all self aware life forms in the universe."

"You really want to leave, don't you?" Chief said, standing in front of him with his arms crossed.

"There's somewhere that I need to be, somewhere where there are people counting on me. I have to get back. I've got a mission to complete."

"I suppose you still won't tell me what it was?"

"Not a chance, tin man." He said, though it was intended as a friendly term and not an insult in any way shape or form.

"It was worth a try. Wellâ€¦if you're really set on getting back then you're right; I can't stop you. I don't have any authority over you. The Monitor will probably be in the Control Room."

"Point me in the right direction and I'll be on my way."

"Can't let you do that; you wouldn't last five minutes if you encountered an enemy, not in your condition."

"I won't ask for help."

"Would you accept it if it was offered?"

"I might do. I wouldn't want to be a burden though."

Sgt Dakes butted in. "Can you quit the bonding session and let me fix this guy up?"

Chief grunted and gestured for him to go ahead.

Sgt Dakes looked Dennis up and own. "Alright, off with the jacket."

"I'll be fine." Dennis said, clutching the front of his suit.

"Come on, don't be shy, we're all men hereâ€¦well, except for Painter bit if that bothers you she can face away."

Dennis glared, huffed and gave in. he dumped his SPR4 on the passenger seat of a Warthog and began unfastening the top half of his suit. (A/N - ok people, I think I made a mistake in Den's original descriptionâ€¦it's a bit hard to tell but it might actually be one whole piece suit, not a jacket and trousersâ€¦and I'm too lazy to re-post the first chapter right now.) The Gloves and watch came off, were placed next to his gun and then he proceeded to pull of the top half and roll it down to his waist. Now bare chested the thick dark bruises left by the Sentinel Major's claws were glaringly obvious and almost painful to look at.

"Damnâ€¦" Sgt Dakes winced in sympathy. "Wellâ€¦I can patch up the outside and give you something to help kill the pain but if there is any internal damage there's nothing I can do. You'll need to pay a visit to an infirmary ASAP if that's the case."

"I knowâ€¦but where am I going to find one around here?"

"Good point, now hold still." He started work with bandages and numbing gel to ease the pain but Dennis wasn't really co-operating. "Look! Will you just hold stillâ€¦stop wriggling!"

"I can't help it!" Dennis whined. "It hurts! Arg! Ow! Watch it! Gya!"

Everybody else smirked and giggled while watching the two sergeants of different marine units fought each other in a rather girly manner; Sgt Dakes trying to finish wrapping Dennis up while Dennis tried to bat his hands away.

Eventually Dennis ended up with neat bandages strapping his chest and he was finally allowed to pull his uniform on again.

Chief handed him back his gloves, watch and gun and then crossed his arms again in a thoughtful manner, head slightly tilted.

"'sup Chief?" Sgt Johnson asked offhandedly, rolling the cigar smoothly from one side of his mouth to the otherâ€¦which was quite an achievement when you consider he didn't use his hands.

"We're going to have to have a chat with the Monitor. If it was able to yank Riley all the way here then there is a great possibility that it'll keep dragging people until it finds someone who'll comply. For now we're safe enough, as \_I \_have the Index but stillâ€¦plus, as we were coming out of that place both the Flood and the Covenant seemed to be laying low. I don't like this one bit. There is something more to what the Monitor had planned. Maybe at first it was just to bring and convince Riley but I have a horrible feeling that it's progressed beyond that now."

"Plus we'll need to get him sent home." Sgt Johnson reminded him.

"Hmmâ€¦rightâ€¦as I said; our best bet is to squeeze the info out of the Monitor."

"If it makes you feel any better about this whole stinkin' mess, I think the Monitor won't be hard to find. Just before you came outside I think I saw it bobbing about up there." He pointed vaguely in the direction of the large open balcony area above the entrance.

Chief peered. "It's somewhere to start. You alright with this?"

Johnson raised one eyebrow. "Not really, but that doesn't mean I won't do my bit and follow along. I might even take point if I'm feeling generous."

Chief nodded. "Let's go then. Onwards and upwards."

\_Hopefully, to some answers. \_Cortana added quietly.

'\_Yeah, that would make a nice change.\_'

Johnson, oblivious to the internal conversation reverberating about the Chief's helmet, turned to his troops. "Alright ladies, pack up your troubles and let's move out. We've got an elusive little

creature to find and it's called an 'answer'â€|they're pretty rare but you may have heard of them, they tend to be attracted to humming blue boxes."

The marines, including Dennis, grumbled an agreement and set themselves ready to go.

Before they went about their business, the Chief had one last thing to say to them as a whole. "I'm pretty sure that there's more to this than meets the eye so keep your wits about you and don't be afraid to call anything you consider suspicious to the attention to the rest of us. You got that Riley?"

Dennis rolled his eyes and nodded, understanding the pointed hint about his reaction to that locked room a while back. "Sure thing, \_boss\_."

And so with those last words of wisdom, all eight of them made their way back inside the depths from which the Chief had only just emerged. Just as before it was eerily quiet and empty but for the corpses of those long since dead by the Chief's and Dennis' hands. Other than that the silence was grating and gradually took its toll on the men (and woman) that cautiously took their steps within it. 'Uncomfortable' would be a highly incorrect word to use to describe the almost palpable sense of unease and tension that emanated from the marines. Chief, Dennis and Johnson managed to keep their cool but the worried glances from Dakes, Martins and Macoon plainly showed their vague distress about the situation they had been thrown into. As for the last two members of the motley crew Painter, though just as nervous as the next person, wore a worrying grin that indicated she was looking forward to blowing up something new while Thring was little more than a quietly jittering wreck that had to be encouraged to keep moving. Such encouragement tended to be along the lines of Chief threatening to plug him in the back of the head if he didn't keep paceâ€|Thring could push \_anyone\_ \_to the end of their tether.

This state of affairs continued until even Thring was beginning to wish that something would actually happen just to get it over with. The waiting, they all concluded, was always far worse than anything that could be hiding in the silence.

As Chief moved swiftly to clear the length of yet another corridor he was halted by the voice of the cold inflicted Martins.

"Chief, Sarge, guysâ€|and galâ€|I, uh," he paused to sniff, "I think I hear something."

Out of sheer nervous boredom they all hurried over to the corridor that Martins had his rifle aimed down.

"What is it?" Johnson asked, staring into the dank depths that seem no different to all the others to him.

"Listen." Martins told him, raising a finger to his ear.

Peering over each others shoulders and looking for all the world like a bunch of curious kids they listened intently to the vague humming tune beyond the shadows.

\_Well that's familiar\_ Cortana said.

"Ah, the Monitor." Chief announced happily and stared towards the source of the sound. "Ok, people; follow that melody."

And that is what they did, for god knows how long. They stalked the corridors like animals with a song as their prey, tracing it through the maze of passages until the little computerized annoyance heralded by a soft blue glow came into their field of vision in the middle of one of the more open areasâ€|yet again littered with the dead.

Hiding around the corner, Johnson grabbed Chief's arm to keep him back.

"What if it runsâ€|well \_floats\_â€|when it sees us? Or zaps itself somewhere?"

"We'll have to catch it." Dennis commented, taking a glance past the wall to confirm the Monitor was still there.

"Don't worry. I've got it covered." Chief assured them both.

\_Oh you do, do you? \_Cortana asked, voice laced with disbelief.

Without another word, Chief shoved his rifle into Johnson's hand and pelted away from the group towards the Monitor.

The Monitor had just about enough time to see the cyborg running full tilt towards it and begin to process the problem when the Chief jumped up, slammed his fist down violently on top of it and knock it into the floor so hard that it bounced twice before skittering away and slamming into Dennis boot.

Just on general principals, Dennis gave it a swift, firm kick to send it back to the Chief.

The Monitor struggled back up into the air and was faced with seven rifles aimed in it s direction.

Johnson tossed the Chief back his weapon and an eighth was added to the threat.

"Well isn't this nice?" Chief asked. "By the way, if you try to go anywhere without permission you'll end up in a hail of bullets so please think carefully. We only want a word, y'know."

The Monitor considered his options, which were depressingly few, and decided to stay put. "And what is it, exactly, that you wish to speak of?"

"You and your stupid plans, that's what." Chief snapped. "Just what the hell were you thinking, bringing this guy here just to try and bully him into activating this place? What, had you finally given up on me? Didn't want to try the Marines? So sick of all of us that you had to go toâ€|toâ€|godknowswhere to find some random man who doesn't have a clue what's going on!"

The Monitor seemed to huffâ€|though \_how \_an electronic appliance can

huff is anyone's guess. "Well-" but he was cut off by and irate super-soldier.

Chief pointed rudely. "Get the message; no-one is going to activate the Installation, we'll make sure of it. \_I'll\_ make sure of it."

"You may change your mind." The Monitor replied.

"No, never."

"I'm afraid that the threat has grown somewhat."

"What do you mean?" Chief growled.

The Marines looked about nervously as if they expected something to jump out of the walls.

"You human are so self-centred. The Installation needs to be activated to wipe out the Flood out for good, but no, you wouldn't be the ones to give the sacrifice for the greater good. Do you think that sentient life would not return after a few million years?"

"It's in our genes to protect ourselves and our blood-line; to allow our species to survive. We're only doing what we were born to do. Now what does that have to do with this bigger threat?"

"Well, after hearing so many refusals to activate the Installations I decided to take action myself. I thought that it would workâ€|the calculations and predictions all showed success."

"Success of \_what\_?"

"The destruction of the Flood through the introduction of a bacteria strain. I discovered it when bringing \_him\_ to the Installation." At the word of '\_him\_' the Monitor bobbed in the direction of Dennis.

Dennis suddenly looked ready to collapse into a quivering wreck on the floor while the Monitor continued to explain the diabolical plan. "I saw the potency of the bacteria and realised that it could be used against the Flood as they are, after all, biological entities capable of being infected and infested by it. My plan was then to release the chemical would eliminate what was left after the Flood were destroyed by it. But I overlooked the complete specifications of the chemical and I've now found that it only \_reverses\_ the process when injected into individual cases. Unfortunatelyâ€|that information was a little late coming to me."

"What have you done?" Chief demanded.

"I brought back, from \_that\_ human's time, several examples of infectants to spread the virus. The ten infected insects have been here for at least an hour."

"No!" Dennis roared out loud as he charged forward and grabbed the Monitor with both hands. "You bastard! You god damned idiot! You brought \_Hydras\_!" he proceeded to slam the Installation 'guardian' repeatedly against the closest wall. "\_Hydras! \_How could you! \_How

could you\_!"

Pieces were beginning to be smashed and knocked out of the Monitor from the force of the blows Dennis was inflicting while he began to turn a rage purple colour.

"Woah!" Painter, Dakes and Macoon yelled in unison as they pounced on the manic marine and, with difficulty, pulled and dragged him away. They pushed him roughly to the floor and held him there until he calmed down and returned to his usual skin tone rather than the deeper shade of beetroot.

With its light flickering and the odd few parts now missing, the Monitor tried to fly awayâ€|only to be snatched out of the air and be leant on by the Chief; sandwiched between the wall and the Spartan's hand.

Now he was calm, the marines let Dennis go. He promptly buried his head in his hands without even bothering to get up. "This can't be happening to me..."

"You might want to explain now." Chief suggested.

\_To be continuedâ€|\_

\_Author's Note â€" Due to an insistent e-mail, this fic struggles its way through another chapter. I'm sorry it took so long but between exams and my imagination going on strike it just wasn't going anywhere fast. Hopefully I'll have some ideas soon. Thank you to everyone who has deemed this monstrosity worthy of a review and I can only hope that you're still reading it.\_

Jaken â€" \_Errâ€|wellâ€|its, um, a bit of all of that really. The problem is that I've never seen the games from start to finish so I just pick up on whatever X-Mep is playing at the time. The games and locations are mixed up and for that I apologise. It seems, however, that the location is predominantly based on 'The Great Journey' (or so I've been told). Yesâ€|I know that means that none of what I'm writing could really be going on because of where characters are supposed to be (ect) butâ€|wellâ€|just consider it AU. Sorryâ€|it's the best I could do when I couldn't get the info I wanted.\_

End  
file.